

## Carl Hiaasen

(Writer, Vero Beach; age 62)

➤ **Mostly, we produce construction jobs** in Florida — construction for the sake of construction. That's basically the same mechanism as a cancer cell.

➤ **I grew up** in what's now Plantation. It was literally on the edge of the Everglades. I'm sure part of it had at one point been in the Everglades. There wasn't a mall, a strip mall, not anything. It had been cow pastures and wetlands, so my childhood was spent outdoors. After school, I'd get on my bike, go snake hunting or fishing, just hanging out and exploring. It was the best possible childhood.

➤ **When you're in journalism**, they don't pay you to be mellow. They pay you to go out and cover what's happening.

➤ **'Hoot,' the first book I wrote** for kids, was a page right out of my own childhood — the little owls and everything. That was me growing up in west Broward County. Near where we lived, there was a lot of open acreage, and it was purchased by a company that was going to build a condominium. The next thing we know there were bulldozers and backhoes, and they cleared the land where these little owls lived, these burrowing owls, and they just buried them alive. That pissed me off then, and it pisses me off today.

➤ **When I start a novel**, I have no idea where it's going to end. Sometimes, I figure it out sooner. Sometimes, I figure it out later. The later I figure it out, the more miserable I am, and my poor family has to put up with me walking around in a dark cloud while I'm

Florida has this incredibly welcoming attitude with regards to corruption. This is by far the crookedest place in the United States.

trying to figure out how the hell to wrap up the book.

➤ **Amendment 1.** You have 4 million people, 75% of everyone who went to the polls, saying take this money from doc stamps and conserve our land. They want these special places to still be here for future generations. Well, you saw what happened this last session. That Rick Scott would disregard this should come as no surprise. But the idea that the leaders of the Senate and the House would give basically their middle finger to 4 million Floridians is so appalling. To see that kind of naked contempt for the will of Floridians is shocking.

➤ **There's no question** that there's a glorious abundance of weirdness and depravity in Florida. As a parent and a grandparent, you have to wonder if this is really where I want my kids to grow up? Is this really what I want my kids to see and experience? But more selfishly, as a writer, you think 'I'm in heaven.'

➤ **Joseph Heller** had a tremendous impact on me — 'Catch 22' — because he was dealing with kind of the darkest of human conditions — war — and still managed to make you laugh.

➤ **If you get into the business** of journalism or the business of writing novels and think you're going to change the world, you're either a madly deluded egotist or you're just mad period. That isn't why you do it. It's enough to know that you've changed a few people's way of thinking or you've plugged into an audience that feels passionate

about something.

➤ **Right after I finished** the golf book, I hurt my back and I had some surgery about two years ago. It hasn't been right ever since. I tried to play nine holes a few months ago and I got through about seven. So, I haven't been playing much golf, but I'd be much worse off if I had to give up fly-fishing.

➤ **Think about my job** as a newspaper columnist. Look at Tallahassee. Look at that complete festival of horrors up there. I will never run out of material.

➤ **When people see their newspapers diminish**, and they think, well, so, it put some reporters and editors out of work. No, no, it's much worse than that. These are your eyes and ears in the community. If you want to know what's going on in your community, you need journalism.

➤ **The last book I read** about Florida that knocked me out of my chair it was so good was Karen Russell's 'Swamplandia.' It was a beautiful and brilliant book. You know what I read recently that I hadn't read for years? I went back and read the 'Yearling' by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Wonderful.

➤ **You can go online** and see what stories are getting the most hits. If there's a story in the [Miami] Herald tomorrow that says 'Kim Kardashian Grows a Third Ass Cheek' and another story, 'Iran Tests a Nuclear Weapon Next to Israel,' which one do you think is going to get the most hits? Kardashian's ass every time. That's a bitter pill for all of us who believe people gravitate to what's really important. ■

